



rails-to-trails
conservancy

Rails to Trails Conservancy National Poll

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December 8th, 2014

Conducted by Lake Research Partners & Bellwether Research

Survey Among 1000 Likely 2016 Voters

September 9th – 14th, 2014 (MOE +/- 3.1%)

Methodology

Bellwether Research and Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey which was conducted by telephone using professional interviewers September 9th-14th, 2014.

The survey reached a total of 1000 likely 2016 voters nationwide.

Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn using a voter file sample. The national data were weighted slightly by gender, age party identification, race, and region to reflect the attributes of the actual population.

The margin of error for the total national sample is +/- 3.1%.



Context

Key Findings – Context

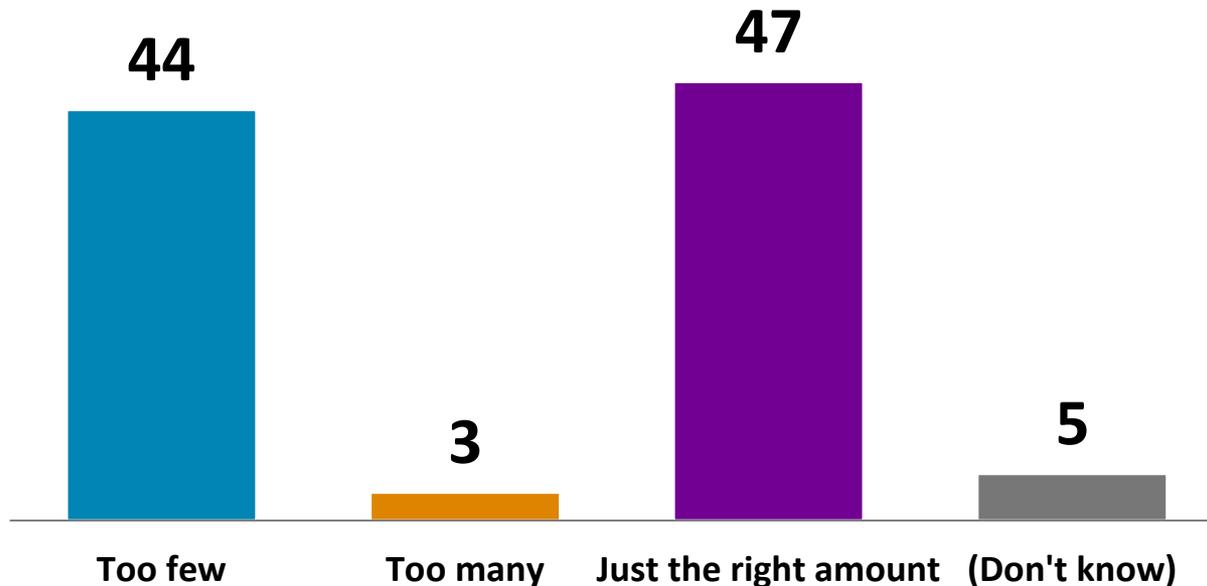
- Voters favor a federal role in funding walking and biking paths and they do not want to decrease the amount of money being spent.
- This survey illustrates there is a definite constituency for walking and biking paths and broad support for expenditures in this area.

Key Findings – Context

- Over forty percent of voters say they have too few paths in their communities.
- It appears that attitudes are highly correlated between perceptions of the number of paths and attitudes toward funding: if a voter thinks the number of paths is about right, they want to maintain current funding. If a voter thinks there are too few paths, then they want to increase funding.
- Few people want to decrease spending.

Voters' perception of the number of walking and biking paths in their communities is evenly split between having too few paths and the right amount of paths. Very few voters say there are too many paths.

Perception of Community Walking and Biking Paths

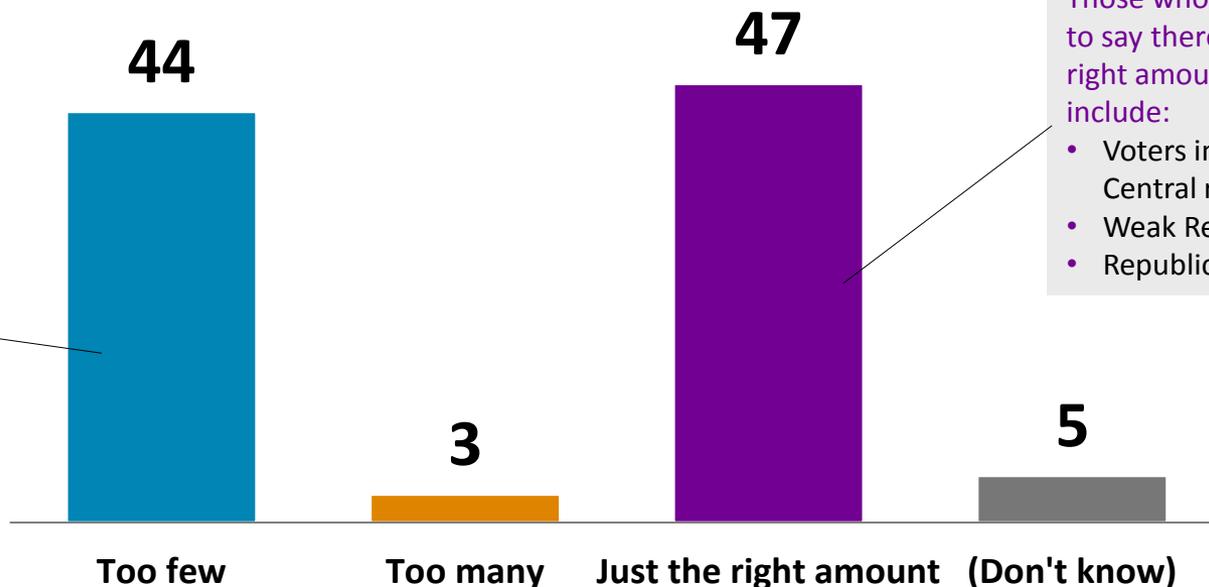


Democrats and voters in the South Central region are among the most likely to say there are too few paths. Republicans and voters in the Midwest are most likely to say the number of paths is about right.

Perception of Community Walking and Biking Paths

Those who are most likely to say there are too few paths include:

- Voters in the West South Central region – 55%
- Voters in the East South Central region* - 54%
- Democratic women – 54%
- Strong Democrats – 52%



Those who are most likely to say there are just the right amount of paths include:

- Voters in the West North Central region – 64%
- Weak Republicans – 58%
- Republican men – 57%

*Note small sample size



Funding

Key Findings - Funding

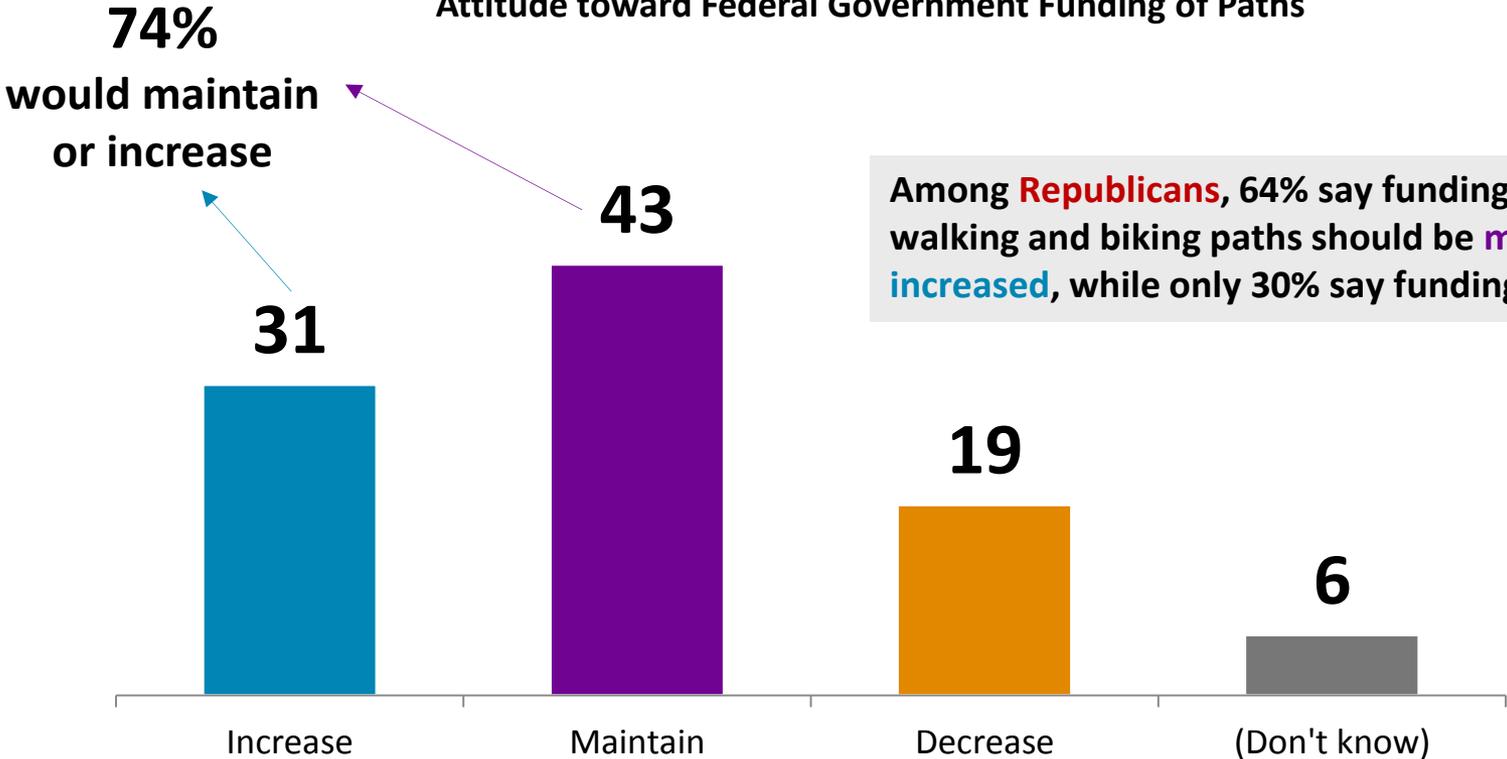
- **Voters prefer maintaining or increasing the percentage of federal transportation funds that support walking and biking over decreasing funds by nearly four to one.** More than four in ten voters prefer to maintain the percentage of current federal transportation funds that support walking and biking. A third would increase this funding and a fifth would decrease it.
- **In a hypothetical exercise, voters would spend significantly more than the current budget on funding for public transportation and walking and biking paths.**
- When asked to distribute \$100 in funding across roads, public transportation, and walking and biking paths, **voters designate about \$27 to walking and biking paths**, 18 times the current funding.

Key Findings - Funding

- Voters seek a **combination** of transportation options and want federal funding to reflect it.
- **Voters are less likely to vote for a candidate who would eliminate funds for walking and biking paths and says that federal transportation funds should be used only for highways and roads.**
- Republicans agree, as do Democrats and Independents.

A plurality of voters prefer to maintain 1.5 percent of the federal transportation funds that support walking and biking. A third would increase this funding and a fifth would decrease it.

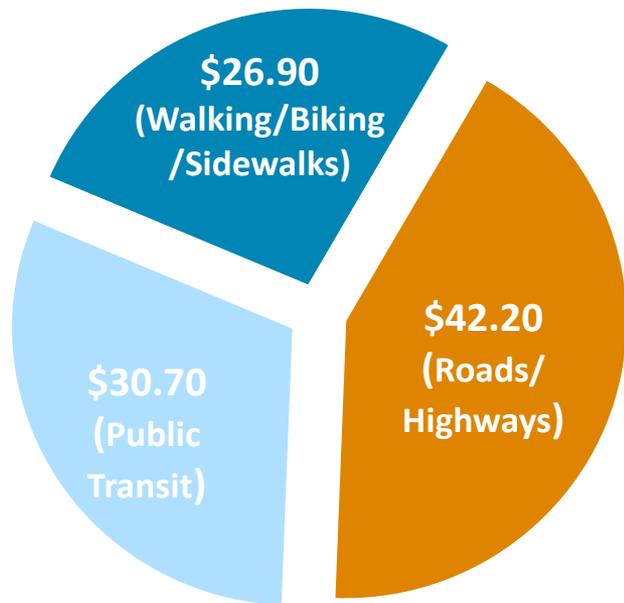
Attitude toward Federal Government Funding of Paths



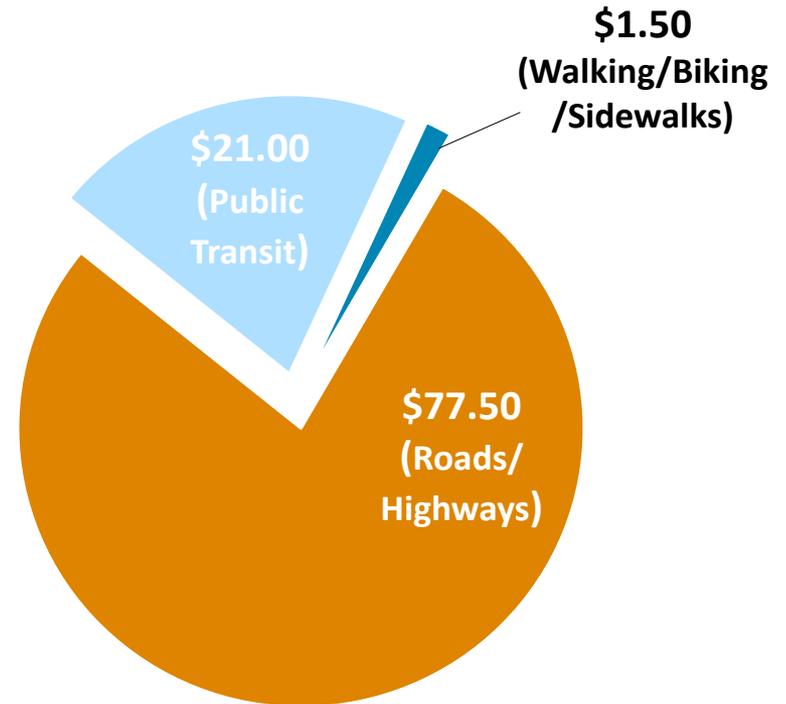
Among **Republicans**, 64% say funding should for walking and biking paths should be **maintained** or **increased**, while only 30% say funding should **decrease**.

Across demographic subgroups, voters say at least ten times the current budget should be allocated for walking and biking paths, and sidewalks.

Voters seek a mixed plan of transportation options reflected in transportation funding. When asked to distribute \$100 in funding, voters designate about \$27 to walking and biking paths, 18 times the current funding.



Poll Results



Current Budget (per \$100)

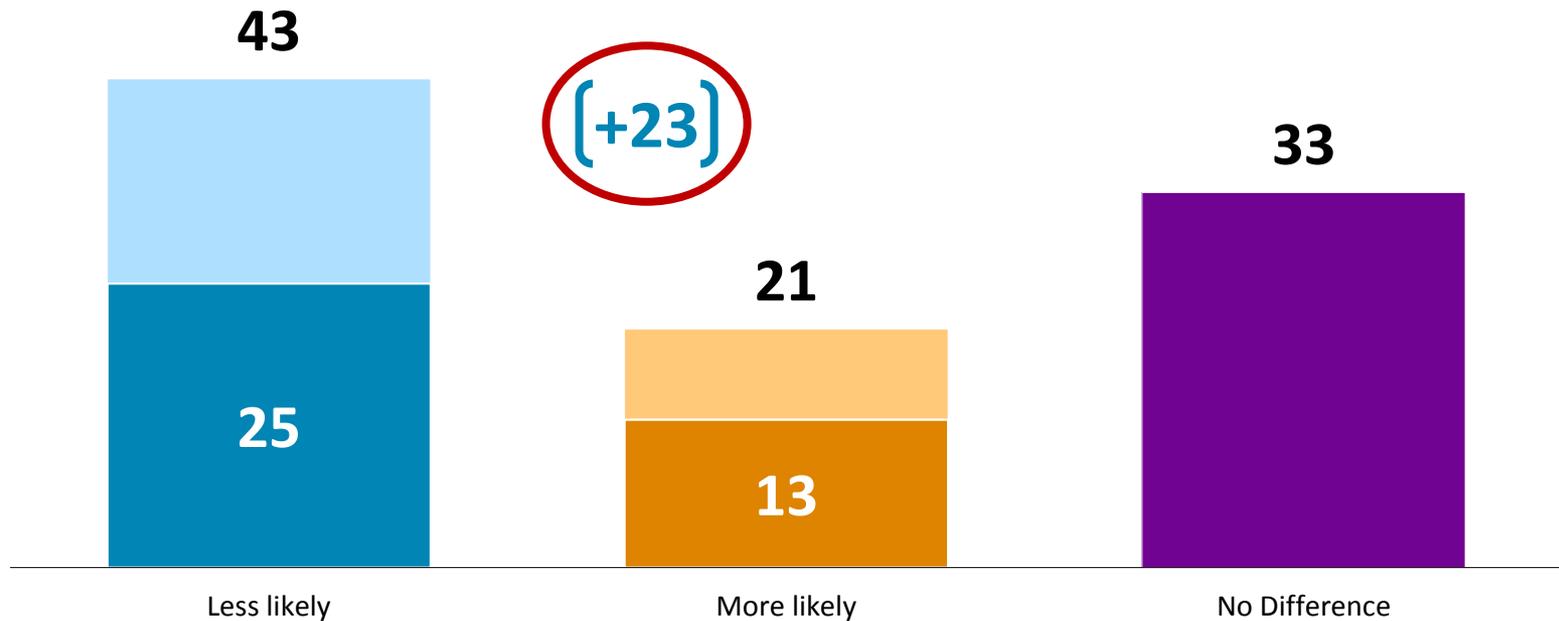
78% of voters believe that funding for expanding and improving walking and biking paths should be more than \$2 – the current equivalent distribution in the budget.

Key 2016 voting blocs support keeping funding for walking and biking trails by wide margins.

Key 2016 Constituencies	Maintain	Increase	Decrease
College-educated women	49	34	13
Republican women	52	15	27
Moms	49	36	11

Voters are less likely to vote for a candidate who would eliminate funds for walking and biking paths and says that federal transportation funds should be used only for highways and roads.

Vote Likelihood for a Candidate that would Fund Only HWYs/Roads and Eliminate Walking/Biking Funds



(+23)

Split sample question

- Much less likely
- Somewhat less likely
- Much more likely
- Somewhat more likely

Across party identification, voters agree.

Likely to Vote for a Candidate Who Would Eliminate Funds	Less Likely	More Likely	No Difference
Republican	36	29	34
Independent	40	17	39
Democrat	54	16	26

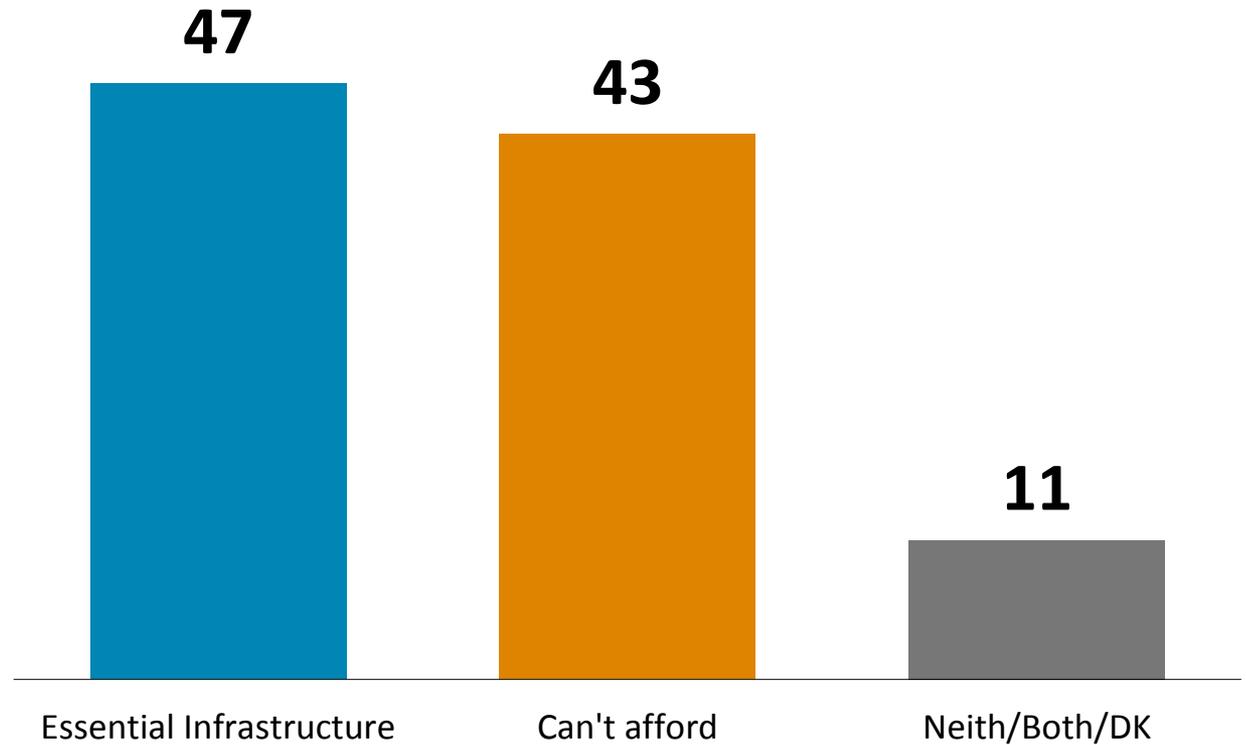
In an engaged debate, we framed this as a choice of how to spend funds in a tough economy when we can't really afford it and voters **STILL** opted (albeit narrowly) to continue funding bike and walk paths.

Essential Infrastructure vs. Can't Afford

Now let me read you two statements and tell me which one comes closest to your view:

Statement A: Some people/other people say that walking and biking paths are essential infrastructure.

Statement B: Some people/other people say that in these tough economic times, we can't afford to spend money on walking and biking paths.



Text of Statements

[Essential Infrastructure] Some people/other people say that walking and biking paths are essential infrastructure. Investing in paths and sidewalks provides safe places for our children, seniors and people with disabilities to get around. Other Americans want the practical choice to walk or bicycle provided by safe and convenient walking or biking routes that connect the places where we live, work, shop, learn, and play. Everyone deserves access to jobs and other opportunities regardless of whether they can drive.

[Can't Afford] Some people/other people say that in these tough economic times, we can't afford to spend money on walking and biking paths. We must focus our tax dollars on our deteriorating infrastructure, like our aging bridges and our roads and highways. The federal government must focus their efforts on improving the nation's highways and bridges, not constructing paths. If communities want to expand their paths, then it should be a local issue, not a federal issue.



What Resonates

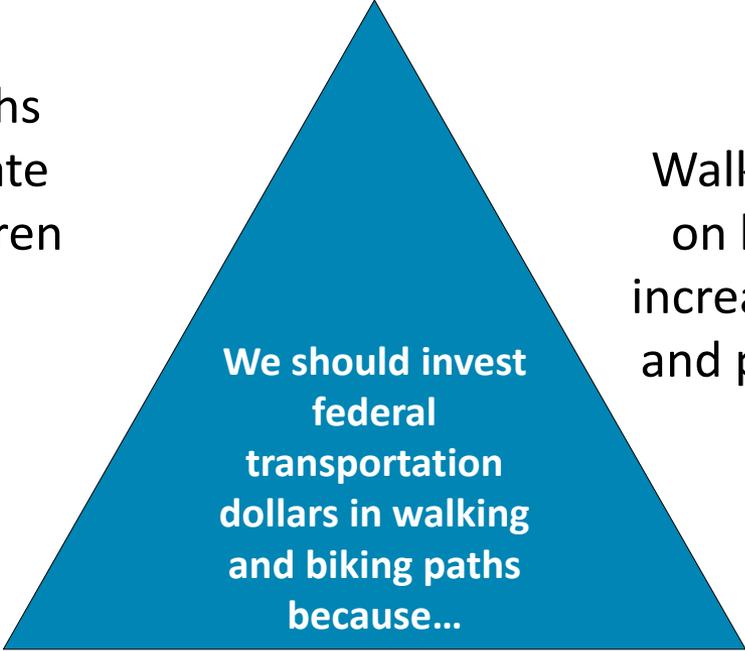
Reasons People Support Walking and Biking Paths

CHILDREN

Walking and biking paths and sidewalks help create safe places for our children to be active.

HEALTH CARE PREVENTION

Walking and biking saves on health care costs by increasing routine exercise and prevention of chronic disease.



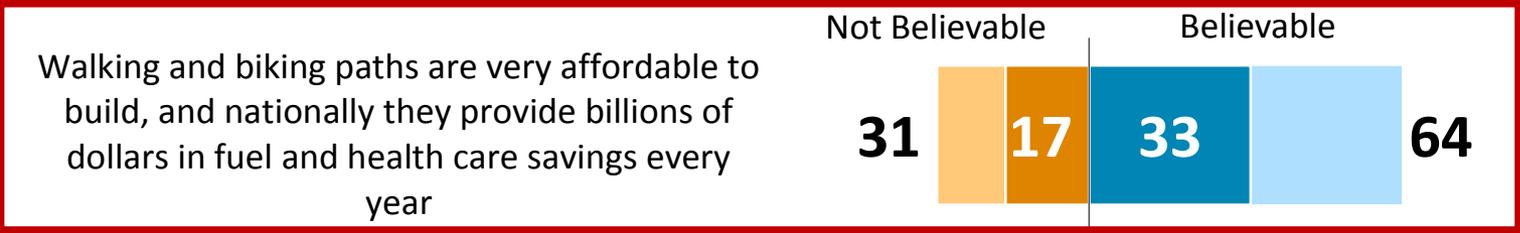
We should invest federal transportation dollars in walking and biking paths because...

COST SAVINGS

Walking and biking paths are very affordable to build, and nationally they provide billions of dollars in fuel and health care savings every year.

The most believable fact to voters is that paths are very affordable and create significant fuel and health care savings.

Walking and Biking Facts: Believability



Walking is the second most common way to get around in America



Net

+33

+19

Half of all trips made by Americans today are within 20 minutes or less by bicycle and a quarter are within 20 minutes by foot



+24

In 4 communities that built walking and biking networks, over 85 million vehicle miles were averted over a 4 year span



+19



Split sample questions

Similarly, the fact about affordability and savings is also the strongest in persuading voters to support federal funding for walking and biking paths.

Walking and Biking Facts: Likelihood to Support Federal Funding



In 4 communities that built walking and biking networks, over 85 million vehicle miles were averted over a 4 year span



Half of all trips made by Americans today are within 20 minutes or less by bicycle and a quarter are within 20 minutes by foot



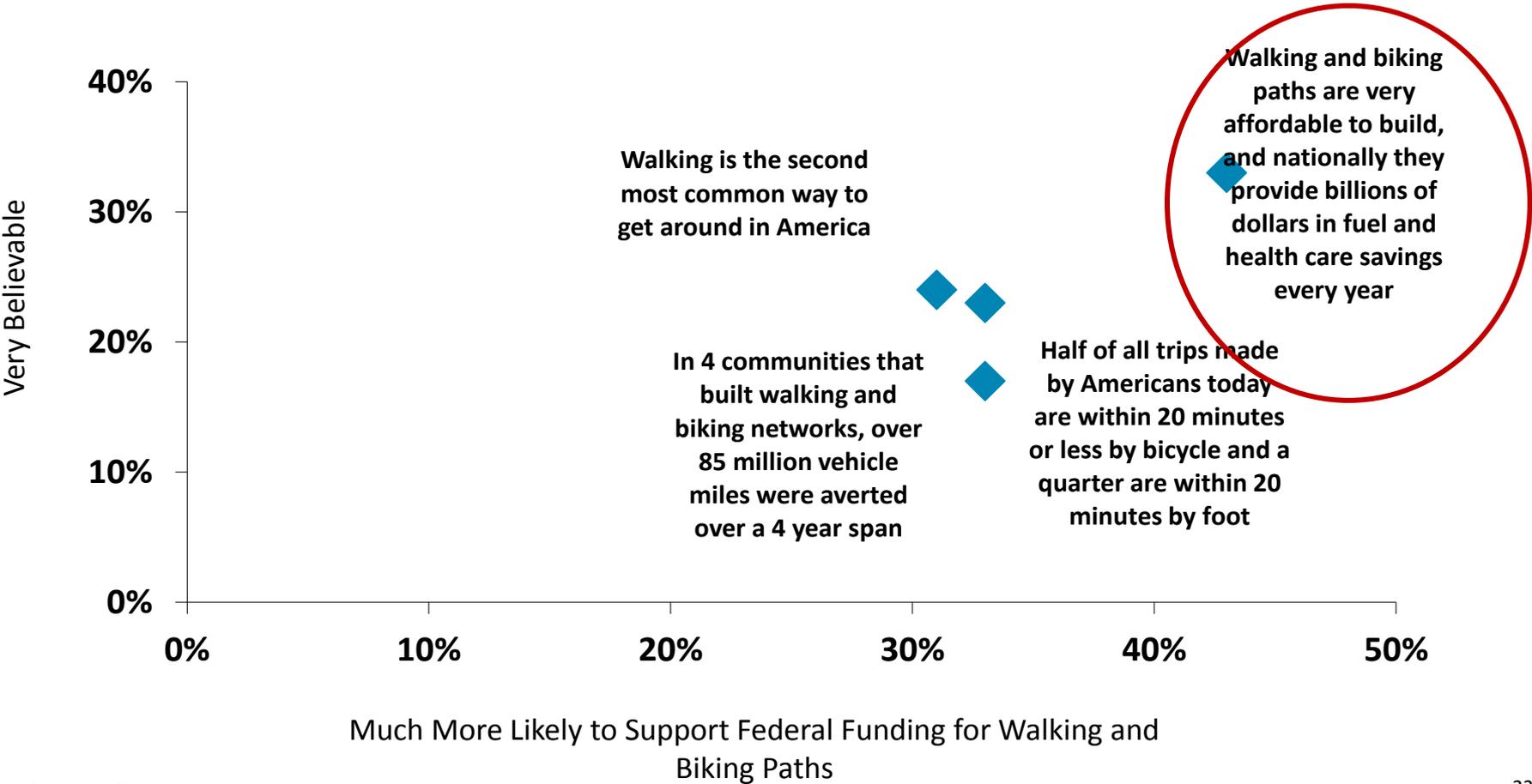
Walking is the second most common way to get around in America



■ Much more likely ■ Much less likely
■ Somewhat more likely ■ Somewhat less likely

Split sample questions

It is clear that the top fact is affordability and savings.



Across party identification, the fact that is most believable and the most likely to make voters support federal funding for walking and biking paths is that they are affordable and provide billions in savings.

	Democrats		Independents		Republicans	
	Believable	More Likely	Believable	More Likely	Believable	More Likely
Walking and biking paths are very affordable to build, and nationally they provide billions of dollars in fuel and health care savings every year.	70	83	71	75	54	67



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